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"Leadership, Partnership, and Championship"

Ways to Improve Your Sense of Humor

By Brian Luke Seaward, Ph.D. *Wellness Management*, Spring 2002

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychology, is most commonly associated with sex, not humor (which is not to say that sex can't be humorous), but in fact, it was Freud who listed humor as one of his now famous "defense mechanisms." Yet unlike denial, suppression or rationalization, he explained that you get more bang for your buck (OK, so that was a Freudian slip), with humor, because it's the ego's only defense mechanism that both decreases pain and increase pleasure.

With the infamous events that occurred on September 11th as well as the recent (perhaps prolonged) down turn in the economy, the Enron debacle, countless layoffs and mergers, there is no shortage for the need for humor these days.

In the many years I have researched the healing power of humor, I never once came across any information on how to improve your sense of humor. Having taught a Humor and Health course, I knew if I told my students this, I would be crucified, so I made up a fictitious list of ways to improve one's sense of humor, and they bought it! Since it worked for them, I thought I would spread this list around. I know these work well at the worksite, because my colleagues at Conoco and Quaker Oats stole this list and told me so. Here goes:

1. Take your job seriously, but take yourself lightly: Without sacrificing your self-esteem, learn to laugh at yourself
2. If you are having a bad day at the office remember the bigger picture, you are not the center of the universe.
3. Try to find one funny thing a day! Humor is a perception. Be on the lookout for funny things in the most unlikely places, like on the drive to and from work, or in the office.
3. Create a tickler notebook: Start collecting funny jokes, cards, cartoons and keep them in a folder. Pull them out when the clouds start rolling in.
4. Find an email pen pal to send and receive jokes. Getting a joke from a colleague or friend can lighten even the worst of days. Pick one person who you know has a good sense of humor and start the ball rolling.
5. A final word about humor: A recent study was conducted in England to determine what was the funniest joke-Ever! This is the joke that was selected: Famed fictional detective Sherlock Homes and his gruff assistant Dr. Watson pitch their tent while on a camping trip. In the middle of the night Holmes nudges Watson to wake him up.

Holmes: "Watson, look up at the stars and tell me what you deduce."

Watson: "I see millions of stars. And if there are millions of stars, even if a few of those have planets, it is quite likely there are some planets like earth. And if there are a few planets like earth, then indeed, there might be intelligent life, much like our own, Sir."

Holmes: "Watson, you idiot, someone stole the tent!"

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CORRECTION

There was an error in the calculation for the 4th place winners of the Crews Into Shape Challenge. After the scores were re-tallied, congratulations are in order for the team Beauties and the Beast from NH Charleston.

"Humor is life's greatest lubricant"
-Art Linkletter

Feedback

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